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THE CASE OF ESPERANTO.

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IT is very evident that both in America and in the Old World, Esperanto is now in the air; and one is overwhelmed with the literature which is coming forward, some of it in Esperanto, and other about Esperanto. The Paris "*Figaro*" had an earnest plea in its favor, from M. René de Saussure, descendant of him of Alpine fame; and a very warm counterplea from M. le Comte d'Haussonville, a member of the great Academy of Sciences. This nobleman has a dread of the new language, as likely to displace his own beloved French from its present supremacy as "the international language of the world." In the same spirit some of ourselves are so fond and so hopeful of English as destined to become the world's language, that we are cold to any competitor. But Esperanto is not a competitor with any national language. If an earthquake were to exterminate all the non-English-speaking humanities, we should quickly relegate Esperanto to the shelf as a memento. Now its mission is exclusively "internacial" (a new word, which Haussonville accepts in French from the Esperantists). The distress and rage of the French nobleman is that professors of the French universities, and even Academicians, including M. le recteur Boirac, have gone over to the enemy; and he would like, the Frenchman here adopting an inelegant Americanism, to wield the "big stick" against them.

On the other hand this arch offender, M. le recteur Boirac, gives us in Esperanto a long account of the visit of the French University men to England and the English universities, and their reception by a representative of the British Government and by King Edward; he also narrates sundry Esperantist inci-

dents of the trip. I wish it were possible to give a translation of this historical narrative, as it is the best possible reply to the charge that Esperanto is not fit to be a vehicle for history or literature. But the reference must be only to one Esperanto incident. When, on behalf of the Government, Mr. Lough, Under Secretary for Education, was addressing the visitors in English, as he spoke rapidly Boirac lost the thread of the speech, and became drowsy. Whereupon he was startled by hearing the word "Esperanto," and next by observing that his colleagues were looking at himself and laughing. Being disconcerted by this, and supposing that the Englisher had been poking fun at his dear fad, he was afterwards relieved to learn that Mr. Lough had highly praised Esperanto, and had urged the extension of its study as destined to aid international comity. He remarked that as between England and France they could manage to get along without it, but in the international congresses which are approaching, and which will include many representatives of distant nations, it will be a great help.

The name of Wilhelm Ostwald ranks high among the world's scholars, as foremost or nearly foremost of Germany's physicists. He has also been a student of the internacial-language question; and in his address last September at the great celebration in Aberdeen University, Scotland, he gave Esperanto a fillip. Remarking that the idea of international peace has no greater promoter than the scientist, he expressed his regret that one great hindrance has been diversity of language; and he added: "I express my strong conviction that this problem is on the way of being solved by means of an international auxiliary language." And in the same spirit the aged Ernst Naville writes that for thirty years he has regarded this as a necessary complement of advancing civilization. "If we can one day say that beside national languages which shall continue their national development, there is a means of communication among all the inhabitants of the earth, a language of humanity, that day will be one of the great dates of history." This is what Esperanto aspires to become, and what those who know it best think it is well fitted to become.

The academic thesis that a world-wide language is an impossibility runs neck and neck with that of the British physicist who contended that an ocean-crossing steamship was impossible.

But now transatlantic steamers are running, and a language is launched and entering business life, which though not aspiring to be universal, is proving itself to be universally international, and we need not further discuss the thesis.

A recent article by Professor Hugo Münsterberg attacks and condemns Esperanto for the sins of the dead Volapük. Its arguments give no indication that the writer knows anything about either of the languages; and all his arguments, except the opening discussion of the spelling reform, appear to be simply a popularization of the arguments of Professor Richard Hamel, in a German work which was published when Dr. Münsterberg was a junior professor in Freiburg.

In the title of Hamel's book, and through the discussion, general condemnations of a universal language appear; but these contemplated only Volapük and its predecessors. When you reach the last section of Hamel's book you come to the word "Esperanto" and find a fair presentation of its merits, furnished by Professor Einstein, a convert from Volapük to Esperanto. Hamel quotes without note or comment Einstein's condemnation of Schleyer, the inventor and dictator of Volapük, whom Einstein calls a "Volapükist Pope"; and Einstein exults at the escape of the new language from any tyranny by "Dr. Esperanto." He says of it: "From the ashes of Volapük came Esperanto, whose words are good old words, known as from Romanish and German origin; and in spite of its regularity its structure is so very Italianesque that one easily fancies it is derived thence."

In all this Hamel is scholarly and fair. It remains for my distinguished Harvard friend to explain why, without explanation, and apparently without examination, he has extended Hamel's charge into a sweeping condemnation of that which Hamel permitted to be praised. In common with most of our American college men, I am an admirer of Dr. Münsterberg, because of his *bonhomie* and his undoubted ability. And in the present instance I wish him success in explaining the situation.

It seems to me very probable that somebody has been frightened by Hamel's illustrations from the "Portuguese Volapüks" of the sixteenth century, and by the telegraph codes with 70,000 words of the nineteenth century. I think that Hamel was sound in this objection as against the Volapük, but that a man misses the mark when he fires it against Esperanto. Zamenhof also was

oppressed by the thought of people being required to memorize a code, and he set himself to provide a remedy. With what result? Here is the evidence beside me, a small book of 27 pages, costing less than two cents, and entitled "The Whole of Esperanto." It consists of a grammar, over which you may leisurely spend an hour. You will then find yourself in the same situation relatively to the *lingvo* that you would occupy relatively to Greek, after you had mastered the declensions and conjugations, in their different voices, the verbs in *mi*, and all the irregular verbs, with the dialectical peculiarities. But still the Esperanto Vocabulary must be faced. Well, here it is, occupying 16 pages of the little book, and containing a fairly complete word - root Vocabulary of two thousand items. From each of these roots you can make the words as easily as you get "loving" after you have found "love" in your dictionary. Each word-root is good for a colony of words. Thus Zamenhof gives from *san* (health) 53 with "&c." to remind us that the well is not yet emptied; and O'Connor gives for the root *lern* (learn), 36 words, beginning *lerni* (to learn), *lernadi* (to study), *lernegi* (to cram), and so on; only a partial list. Under this system there can be little terror in the presence even of 70,000 words.

I have tried to estimate how many of the roots would be new to an English boy who had no Latin, and the result was one-third nearly, or about 600; to one who had Latin and English, about half as many; to one of our college teachers I should say about 100; to be mastered not in advance, but as they occur in detail. So there need be no alarm.

The uninitiated reader may well ask how is it possible to do all that is claimed by Esperantists. The only reply must be that it was a work of genius, though, now that it is done, it seems very simple and obvious. Perhaps the best way of explaining it is to give a sketch of another competitor for internacial honors, the Neutra. This youngster is a wonder. Two pages of it were sent to me, and though printed in Russia by people who probably knew no English, I translated the whole thing at sight, without the help of grammar or dictionary. It gave me as much trouble, apparently, as I should have had if it had been in phonetically printed English. I think it is a system that may be utilized in the code-telegraph method, so as to avoid translating. It was constructed by old Volapükists as a counterblast to Esperanto;

and its method was to pick out the common sporadic words of the modern European languages, as far as common words go, and then to fill the gaps from Latin as an over-tongue. The same method may be extended to the languages of other continents; to the Indian languages, with Sanskrit as the over-tongue; and the Chinese languages, with the Mandarin as over-tongue; and to a good many languages of Western Asia and North Africa, with Arabic as over-tongue. The other side of the work, writing Neutra, would still involve the difficulties of Volapük, and must be faced by means of having the telegraph-offices supplied with men who were specially trained for a very difficult work. The language also has been not merely simplified but denuded of its grammar, and internationally made as different as possible from Esperanto. This has been a mistake, which may prejudice its utility in practice. As an international language it is hopeless, as it only postpones, and thereby intensifies, the troubles of Volapük.

The first problem which Zamenhof attacked and solved in his great work was the grammar. If I take from the Lord's Prayer a single sentence the method can be easily seen: "*Kaj ne konduku nin en tenton, sed savu nin de la malbono.*" Here are some small words, which, after the style in Greek grammar, I am tempted to call "particles"; such as adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions; they are inevitable but not very numerous. One of them is the first word *kaj* (with the Continental pronunciation of *j* as if it were *y*). This is the Greek particle, signifying "and." Another is *ne*, the Latin negative, which with various modifications runs through the European languages; again, *en*, "in" or "into" is a preposition, French-Spanish, and corresponding to the Latin-Italian-English "in." *Sed*, "but," is pure Latin; *de*, "of," is also somewhat of a European tramp, in the Latin countries, though foreign to German-English.

The remaining monosyllables are apt to be either pronouns, or *la*, "the," which is French-Italian. One of these pronouns is *nin*, the final letter, *n*, always marking the accusative case, and the other part *ni*, "we," being our old acquaintance in Greek, Latin, Italian, French, etc. Now, coming to the many-syllables we have one of them, *malbono*, ending in *o*, which is always the diacritic mark of a noun in the nominative singular; another, *tenton*, ending in *on*, which is the accusative singular of a noun,

and two ending in *u*, which is always the imperative-subjunctive of a verb. The first of these, *konduku*, or “lead,” “conduct” in the English; either “do thou conduct,” “do ye conduct,” or “let us conduct,” according to the context. Professor Münsterberg quarrels with this because it does not, like Greek or Latin, give a different form for each number and person; but neither does the English nor his own German in this case; yet we get along well enough without it. In cases, as the present of *am*, and of other verbs, where the distinction is retained, it becomes a snare to children, who mix “am” and “is” and “are”; and even to pulpitmen who sometimes shock our grammatical feelings by starting quarrels between verbs and their nominatives. So we offer thanks to Dr. Zamenhof for having moved away a stumbling-block.

We have said that *tenton* is the accusative singular of a noun. It is our English word, *tempt*, in the reformed spelling of Esperanto; or perhaps it has flowed pure from the Latin-Italian *tentare*. Having neither suffix nor prefix, it is a type of the fundamental Esperanto words. We may even try it as a specimen of word development. *Tento* is the noun, temptation; *tenta*, the adjective, tempting; *tenti* is the verb, to tempt; and its present participle, recalling our Latin acquaintance, *tentans* with its genitive *tentantis*, is *tentanta*, tempting, or with a noun ending *tentanto*, a tempter; the adverb would be *tente*, or a participial adverb *tentante*, temptingly. Then we might try the prefixes, *ektenti*, to begin tempting; *mal tenti*, to do the opposite of tempting, whatever that may be; and again the suffixes, *tentego*, would be a great temptation; *tenteto*, a small, petty, temptation; *tentaro* would signify temptations taken collectively, and *tentero*, one of the temptations taken separately. If *tento*, or *tentego*, or *tentanto*, be personified, as a male demon, then his female counterpart is, *tentino*, *tentegino*, or *tentantino*.

Thus when any one root-word occurs in a vocabulary, it stands for a host of its friends and foes. *Malbono*, the evil, is an instance of the value of the prefix *mal*, which turns good (*bono*) into its antithesis. *Savu* is the imperative of the word coming from the root of our English word save, and needs no comment further than to note that its participial noun *Savanto* is the great word for Saviour. He is the *Savanto de la mondo*, the “Saviour of the World,” just as Esperanto, the “Hoper,” was the pet

name of Zamenhof, and has stuck to his language, as perpetuating its Christian optimism.

The two words *tenton* and *malbono* give us one of the refinements of the Esperanto grammar. The rule is that every preposition governs the nominative case in this language. But whilst *tenton* is accusative, *malbono* is nominative according to the rule. There is, however, another rule, that the goal at which we arrive, either in space or time, must go into the accusative; and as *en* here signifies temptation as the goal, and is to be translated not *in* but *into*, we use the accusative. Refinements of this kind amuse Esperantists, who are desirous to perfect their "kara lingvo," and who are very much afraid that some of us may spoil it by our inexperience. But the language itself is delightfully easy, and positively fascinating.

The objection that people from remote places could not understand each other, even if they should master a common language, was plausible when presented by Hamel. He spoke of failures of the sixteenth century in China, Malaya, Tamul and India; and he might have referred to later times, with *pigeon-English*. That sort of English is very useful along the Chinese seaboard, but, after all, is very imperfect as a vehicle for literature. If I with my Scotch-Irish English tried to regulate a sampan-man with his pigeon variety, I fear I should be worsted. Now, in Princeton, however, where for a third of a century I have been conscientiously endeavoring to exuviate the Scotch-Irish, all my efforts have failed. Yet I have discovered that, thanks to the internationalism of these boys, I have been well understood, and the "brogue" has done me no harm. And I can assure my Harvard friend that his Teutonic lingualism is no hindrance to our comprehension of his winged words, but, on the other hand, it is a factor in his charming personality. He will be doubtless interested in being informed that recent observation proves that if Roumania and Nebraska learn Esperanto, and meet in a "so-called congress" in Geneva or elsewhere, they will get on together very pleasantly. Even the men who had only a writing knowledge of the lingvo conversed from the start by writing, and in a few days found themselves able to "interparol."

Another case which M. Beaufront reports is instructive. A party of Swedes went on some mission to Odessa, in Southern Russia, having only Swedish and Esperanto. At first nobody un-

derstood them, but the reporter of a newspaper took up the language, and in one day learned it sufficiently to get the message and to make use of it in next day's paper. These Swedes, and the Norwegians, who are always up to a good thing, are doing fine service of a missionary sort for the cause.

Remembering that some, like Zamenhof and Münsterberg, are grandly idealistic and poetical in their contact with this subject, I must confess that most of the crowd are only commonplace people who fancy that the international tongue can be of service one way or other. Of this sort I suppose are the army and navy officers, who hope to find it useful in their relations, friendly or otherwise, with outsiders; and the London business people, and County Councils, who are spreading it through the schools with small regard for its idealism; and the worthy Roman Catholic friends, like the French priests, who are said to be turning the Gospel of Mark into Esperanto; and men like Editor Peltier of Tours, and Dr. O'Connor of London, whose excellent text-book is used by many of us. These have been publishing a *Catholic Esperanto*, for religious purposes, and were recently commended by the Pope for their service. Their advertisement contains a recommendation of the language as useful to missionaries who are scattered afar, and who are now able to communicate only by writing in Latin. On seeing this notice it occurred to me that it would be good for our Protestant missionaries if we had a portion of the Gospels Esperantized, so that they and their assistants, always having the Gospels in their vernaculars, might easily learn the *lingvo* for mutual correspondence. Dr. Wherry, the Indian missionary, informs me that missionaries in Borneo are already using it for corresponding with their patrons in Europe.

On obtaining Mielck and Stephan's Gospel of St. Matthew in Esperanto, I found, whilst greatly pleased with it in many respects, that we could not use it without a thorough revision. And I devoted the summer months to this task, with the aid of Westcott & Hort's Greek Testament, and the English Revised Version. I have done the work in the cold-blooded, scientific fashion, and have to bear witness that in order to represent the Greek fairly in Esperanto I found it necessary only to invent two new words, one being *parabo*, for parable (the longer word *parabolo* has been preempted by mathematics); the other, curiously, is the word for priest, which I call *pretro* (after the French *prêtre*).

The explanation of this last word being required is that the Roman Catholics who have chiefly had matters in charge very properly prefer to call their modern priests by the Esperanto name for clergy generally, *pastro*; and as the New Testament has the two kinds, priests and pastors, I made a word for the former. In a few cases Esperanto gives a happier rendering of Greek than English provides. For example, the grape-clusters, which men do not gather from thistles, are called "grapes" in our English versions; and English has not two words to denote the difference between the two kinds of baskets used for the crumbs left after two different occasions of feeding the multitude. These delicate distinctions could not be shown in English save by using inelegancies.

GEORGE MACLOSKIE.